

1980

## The relationship among the cognitive, role-taking, and moral development abilities of emotionally disturbed adolescents

James Francis Kenney  
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THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND  
MORAL DEVELOPMENT ABILITIES OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED  
ADOLESCENTS

*The College of William and Mary in Virginia*

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THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE  
COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT ABILITIES  
OF  
EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED ADOLESCENTS

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty of the School of Education  
The College of William and Mary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
James Francis Kenney


April, 1980

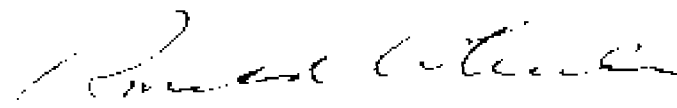
APPROVAL SHEET

We the undersigned do certify that we have read this dissertation and that in our individual opinions it is acceptable in both scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Accepted May 1980 by

  
Robert B. Bloom, Ph.D., Chairman

  
Royce W. Chesser, M.Ed.

  
Ronald C. Wheeler, Ph.D.

## DEDICATION

TO

MARY

For all the times you have helped me to look a little deeper, to think a little harder, to search a little further, and to reach for the brightest star, but most of all, for helping me to be a better person because of your love, support, and encouragement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

From the literature there is evidence that positive social behavior is linked to student's abilities to take the perspective of others. For example, Brim (1960; 1966) hypothesized that the failure to role-take increases the difficulty of monitoring one's own behavior. Periodically we encounter behavior-disordered adolescents who seek companionship; yet their aggressive behavior hinders their bids for friendship and alienates potential playmates. These adolescents apparently fail to perceive that others dislike their aggressive behavior.

Investigations of emotionally disturbed students (Chandler, Greenspan, and Barenboim, 1974; and Neal, 1966) suggest that such students frequently manifest developmental deficits in role-taking abilities. As a result, the adolescent may be misreading the actions and interactions of others and is probably basing his subsequent behavior on erroneous information.

Not only are persons' social behavior linked to their abilities to take the perspective of others, but there is also a notable interrelatedness among the cognitive, role-taking, and moral development skills on each individual.

Research by Kohlberg (1976), and Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey (1974), show the mediating role of cognitive development on moral judgment, while Selman (1971) points out that role-taking, as a form of social cognition,

is immediate between one's logical and moral thought.

Since emotionally disturbed adolescents have difficulty making appropriate social and moral judgments, the greater our understanding of the relationship among their cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment skills, the greater understanding we will have of the emotionally disturbed adolescent per se.

The extant study will attempt to show the relationships among these three variables, and thereby present a more adequate picture of the social development of emotionally disturbed adolescents. In understanding how an emotionally disturbed adolescent perceives various social and moral dilemmas, it may become possible to develop more adequate programs and intervention strategies in response to their needs and eventually increase emotionally disturbed adolescents' abilities to have a more adequate repertoire of skills for use in the interpersonal interrelations demanded in a complex society.

#### Theoretical Rationale

This study is based upon the interrelated structural-developmental concepts of Piaget, Flavell, and Kohlberg. Piaget's structural-developmental cognitive theory is the basis for the cognitive aspects of this study, and also provides the theoretical foundation and cornerstone of the investigation. Flavell's structural-developmental theory will describe the role-taking concept, and Kohlberg's developmental theory will provide for the moral judgment aspects.

Piaget is primarily interested in the theoretical and experimental investigation of the qualitative development of the intellectual structure

(Piavell, 1963). His four-phased structural-developmental model of sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages of cognitive development has provided students of intellectual, social and moral development with what appears to be a culturally free invariant sequence of qualitative changes in intellectual development.

New born children pass through a period of sensorimotor exploration of the world. The children's attention is directed primarily toward themselves and to things only in so far as they relate to their own world (Boyle, 1969). The preoperational phase comprises the children's development from the close of the sensorimotor phase to the time thought becomes "operational." Children begin to take interest in the people and things around themselves but still see things from their own point of view. Egocentrism is characteristic of this phase. The third phase is called the concrete operational phase. Essentially the concepts of integration and reversibility solidify on the concrete level. The children can classify groups one within the other. For example, children can group together all bricks of a similar color as well as order things in size in a systematic way. At this level the children are concerned with the actual, that is, with what is present to them in the concrete. In the final stage of formal operations, the adolescents are concerned with what is possible. According to Boyle (1969), formal operational thinking is characterized by "an appreciation of the totality of relationships between propositions, and for this reason, the formal operations phase is often called the phase of propositional operations" (p. 73).

At this time the two forms of reversibility (inversion and reciprocity) become integrated into a single system.

Building upon the structural-developmental model proposed by Piaget, Selman (1976) has elucidated a sequence of social-perspective-taking levels, each of which describes a form of reasoning about the relation of self's perspective on social events to that of others. Consistent with Flavell's (1968) definition that social-perspective-taking is the ability to understand the interaction between the self and another as seen through the other's eyes, Selman (1971) has shown that role-taking is related to one's ability to make specific inference about another's capabilities, attributes, expectations, feelings, and potential reactions. The role-taking stages move from an egocentric viewpoint where a child fails to distinguish between the feelings and thoughts of others and self, to the self-reflective stage where an individual realizes that both self and others can view each other mutually and simultaneously as subjects.

Also using Piaget's structural-developmental theory as a foundation, Kohlberg (1969) has developed a six-stage model of moral judgment development. He has proposed a hierarchical model of how subjects think about moral issues. Kohlberg's six stages are presented in three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Each level is comprised of two stages. These stages take an individual from the primary stage where an act is thought to be good or bad according to the physical consequences of the action to the highest level of moral functioning which is called the universal ethical principle where right is defined

by self-held, abstract ethical principles.

Research by Selman (1971) provides the data that show the interdependency of moral judgment of role-taking skills while the research of Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey (1974) and Kohlberg (1976) show the dependency of moral development on cognitive skills. There appears to be a necessary but not sufficient causal relationship wherein the attainment of an appropriate level of cognitive development must precede the attainment of an appropriate role-taking perspective, which precedes attaining developmentally appropriate moral maturity.

While the literature describes some of the dependency and inter-relatedness among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development abilities of some individuals, little has been done to show this relationship within the emotionally disturbed adolescent population. Therefore, this research explores the relationship among the cognitive, role-taking, and moral judgment development abilities of the emotionally disturbed adolescents.

#### Sample and Data Gathering Procedures

The sample consisted of nine adolescents placed by the school system in a non-mainstreamed program for the emotionally disturbed. These students were matched for age, sex, race and intellectual quotient (IQ) with nine "normal" adolescent volunteers from the local high school.

Each of these subjects was assessed individually with the following instruments:

The Binet-Simon Absurd Sentences Test, as used by Piaget, determined the subjects' level of cognitive functioning.



Flavall's Picture Story Role-taking Task assessed the role-taking skills of each individual.

The Moral Judgment Interview Form A, as developed by Kohlberg, was given to determine the level of moral judgment development.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test provided the basic intellectual assessment in order to determine the IQ match.

Three adults were trained to administer the various tasks and two independent evaluators were retained to score each task.

#### Definition of Terms

Cognitive Ability. Helmore (1969) quotes Piaget as defining this skill as the "state of equilibrium towards which tend all successive adaptations of a sensorimotor and cognitive nature, as well as, all assimilatory and accommodatory interactions between the organism and the environment" (p. 5). In this study cognitive ability refers to one's ability to think logically and abstractly as exhibited by clarifying the absurdities found on the Binet-Simon Absurd Sentences Test.

Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents refers to a non-random sample of adolescents placed by their school division in a non-mainstreamed program for the emotionally disturbed. These students, because of their apparent antisocial and often disruptive behavior, cannot function within the normal school setting.

Intelligence. While there is no generally recognized definition for the term intelligence, Binet describes it as the characteristic of individuals' thought processes that enables them to take and maintain a direction without becoming distracted, to adapt means to ends, and to

criticize their own attempts at problem solving (Hilgard and Atkinson, 1967, p. 627). In this study intelligence refers to the subject's ability to respond to the pictures of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Moral Judgment refers to "how children think about moral issues" (Selman, 1971, p. 80). In this study, moral judgment refers to the students' responses to the social-moral dilemmas found on Form A of Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview.

Role-taking Ability refers to "the ability to understand the interaction between the self and another as seen through the other's eyes" (Selman, 1971, p. 80), that is, the ability to be able to take the perspective of another and to be able to act and react to that perspective. In this study role-taking ability is defined as the subject's responses to Flavell's Picture Story Role-taking Task.

#### General Hypothesis

Emotionally disturbed adolescents, when matched with normal adolescents for age, sex, race and intelligence, will score significantly lower on tests of cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development.

## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

In studying the relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development, it becomes apparent that for all three categories a horizontal, as well as a vertical, developmental sequence occurs.

The vertical cognitive-developmental approach involves the analysis of thought structure underlying the intellectual concepts of persons at different age levels in order to define a general direction of movement. Each stage has clearly delineated characteristics. For example, each stage is an integrated whole rather than simply the sum of ideas pertaining to isolated bits of behavior. The central concept defining a stage is reflected in many acts and there is considerable consistency in level responses among an individual's acts. Stages differ qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Also in the course of development a given stage is viewed as being integrated into the next and replaced by it. An emerging stage develops out of its predecessor and is thus a synthesis of the old and the new. It should be noted that each individual contributes actively to working out his own synthesis rather than adopting a ready-made one provided by the culture. Finally, because earlier stages are necessary parts of their successors, the individual must pass through all preceding stages before he can move on to the next one. It must also be noted that although the particular age at which a stage appears is influenced by environment and level of cognitive development either of

which can advance or retard, and even in extreme instances preclude the appearance of a stage, the stages will appear in the same order for all individuals (Hoffman, 1970, pp. 264-465).

Vertically, therefore, each aspect of cognitive development examined in the extant study exhibits a definite developmental schema of invariant sequence according to which the order of succession of stages is constant and universal; that is, there is a vertical sequence of steps in movement upward from stage one to stage two to stage three.

At the same time there is a double horizontal sequence of steps. As will be explained in the development of this paper, there is a horizontal sequence of steps in movement from cognitive to social role-taking to moral judgment. There is also a specific horizontal sequence in each domain and categorical level. Within a specific domain one aspect develops before another. For example, on the preoperational level the understanding of permanence of quantity develops before that of permanence of weight. This a temporal gap or what Piaget calls a decalage and because the gap occurs within the limits of one stage of development Piaget would call it a horizontal decalage. These gaps will be found in all levels as well as within each of the three variables being studied.

#### Cognitive Development

In explaining the horizontal sequence from cognitive to role-taking to moral judgment, the first concern is to provide some background concerning the cognitive developmental theory of Piaget. According to Kohlberg (1976), the foundation of all developmental stage theories is Piaget's

stages of logical reasoning: sensorimotor, preoperational (intuitive), concrete operational, and formal operational. On the sensorimotor level the child explores his world through his senses and sees all things in relation to himself.

In the intuitive stage the child moves from performing only motor actions to becoming able to invent new patterns of behavior by means of words, actions, and symbolic play. Some understanding of the concept of cause and effect is now present, but the child can only consider one action or one variable at a time.

At the beginning of the concrete operational level the child exhibits a degree of internalized thought and as he passes through this stage the processes of classification and serialization become apparent. Near the end of this stage reversibility is developed and thus logical thought begins to appear.

The highest level of cognitive thought is the stage of formal operations. Here the individual is no longer deterred by his perception, nor limited by the concrete situation. The individual on this level of functioning can think and reason inductively, being able to generalize from a number of instances.

#### Role-taking Development

Within a developmental epoch and following the attainment of a particular stage of cognitive development, comes the further development of social role-taking skills. These stages describe the level at which the person sees other people, interprets their thoughts and feelings, and sees their role in society (Kohlberg, 1976).

Drawing upon the work of Piaget and others, Flavell (1968) hypothesized that children's role-taking and social-cognitive skills are also developmental in nature. He defined role-taking as the ability to understand the interaction between the self and another as seen through the other's eyes. It seemed apparent to Flavell that while an adult is clearly disposed and able to engage in role-taking aspects of a social-cognitive nature, the infant is not; therefore, the disposition and ability must develop during part or all of the intervening childhood. With this in mind he investigated the general ability and disposition to "take the role" of another person in the cognitive-social sense, that is, to assess his response capacities and tendencies in a given situation.

To test this hypothesis that role-taking abilities are developmental in nature, Flavell (1968) assessed twenty students each on eight grade levels ranging from second through eleventh grade. Each subject was shown an ordered series of pictures which tell a story in a comic-strip fashion. After the subject had narrated the story, three of the pictures were removed, leaving a four-picture sequence that illustrated a completely different story. A second experimenter then entered the room and the subject was asked to predict the story that the second experimenter would tell on the basis of having seen only the set of four pictures. The results indicated a significant age trend; the subjects' abilities to take the perspective of another person increased with age.

Building upon Flavell's work, Selman (1976) describes the developmental aspect of role-taking as follows: the role taking stages move from an egocentric viewpoint where the child fails to distinguish between the

feelings and thoughts of other and self to stage one which is the social-informational stage where the child is aware that other has a social perspective different from his but tends to focus on one perspective rather than coordinating viewpoints.

Stage two is described as the self-reflective role-taking stage in which the child is conscious that each individual is aware of the other's perspective and that this awareness influences self and other's view of each other. In other words, I know you know I know.

From the self-reflective stage, one moves into the mutual role-taking level (stage three) where the individual realizes that both self and other can view each other mutually and simultaneously as subjects. This developmental level serves as the basis for the final stage (four) in which the individual realizes that mutual perspective-taking does not always lead to complete understanding. Social conventions are seen as necessary because they are understood by all members of the group.

To study this developmental phenomenon, Piaget (Piaget and Inhelder, 1956) devised what has become a classic study. A child is seated facing a scale model of three mountains and is tested for his ability to predict how the model would look to another child seated at various positions around the room. They found that the child under six years of age is egocentric in his perceptions of the physical world, believing, for example, that someone standing opposite him has the same view of the model mountain that he has. Around age six the child realizes that self and others may have different interpretations of the same social situations, but is unable to coordinate the perspective. Finally, around age eleven

the child can coordinate perspectives simultaneously.

### Moral Development

After attaining the developmentally appropriate level of role-taking, the final stage on the horizontal continuum appears to be the stage of moral development. Utilizing the basic cognitive-developmental approach of Piaget, Kohlberg (1963) investigated the development of moral judgment.

Kohlberg's (1976) six stages are presented in three levels: pre-conventional, conventional and postconventional. Each level is comprised of two stages. Punishment and obedience make up the orientation for stage one. At this stage an act is thought to be good or bad according to the physical consequences of the action. There is no cognition of "meaning" or "value" at this stage. Within the instrumental hedonistic orientation of stage two, right action consists in that which satisfies one's own needs, and occasionally the needs of others. In common parlance: you scratch my back and I will scratch your back.

On the conventional level, maintaining social status is seen as valuable in itself. Stage three can be described as interpersonal concordance or the "good person" morality. At this stage good behavior is whatever pleases others and is approved by them while in stage four the law and order orientation is prevalent. This stage is built on authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists in doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

At the highest level, the postconventional level, a person becomes



able to distinguish moral values and principles which are applicable apart from the authority of the group or persons holding these principles. Stage five is therefore described as the social contract stage. Right action tends to be defined in terms of individual rights and standards which are acceptable to the whole community. There is a new emphasis upon consensus and an awareness that rules can be changed for the benefit of the society. Right and wrong is a function of personal values and opinions. The final stage, and thought to be the highest level of moral functioning, is called the universal ethical principle stage. Right is defined by self-held, abstract ethical principles. These principles are matters of conscience. Basically these are universal principles of justice and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

While the stage of role-taking and moral development are somewhat closely related, the stages of role-taking development seem to be more general than, and prior to, the moral development stages. Table 1 shows the parallel structured relations between cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment stages as just discussed.

#### Horizontal Dependency

Kohlberg (1976) states "that since moral reasoning is clearly reasoning, advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning" (p. 5). A person's cognitive developmental stage puts a certain ceiling on the role-taking and moral development one can attain. Little research indicates a relationship between cognitive functioning and role-taking abilities. The relation between cognitive and moral development

Table 1

PARALLEL STRUCTURED RELATIONS BETWEEN COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND MORAL JUDGMENT STAGES

Cognitive Stage*	Role-Taking Stage**	Moral Judgment Stage**
<p><u>Stage 0</u> - Symbolic, Intuitive</p> <p>From performing only motor actions, the child can now invent new patterns of behavior by means of words, actions and symbolic play, and shows he can understand the results of his actions before he performs them but the child can only consider one action or one variable at a time.</p>	<p><u>Stage 0</u> - Egocentric Viewpoint</p> <p>The child has a sense of differentiation of self and other but fails to distinguish between the social perspective (thoughts, feelings) of others and self. The child can label other's overt feelings but does not see the cause and effect relation of reasons to social actions.</p>	<p><u>Stage 0</u> - Premoral</p> <p>Judgments of right and wrong are based on good or bad consequences and not on intentions. Moral choices derive from the subject's wishes that good things happen to self. The child's reasons for his choices simply assert the choices, rather than attempting to justify them.</p>
<p><u>Stage 1</u> - Concrete Operations - Categorical Classification</p> <p>The child will commence his answering from the level of internalized thought. As the child progresses through this stage they develop an ability to attain different views. Classification and serialization are present allowing the child to see relationships between objects.</p>	<p><u>Stage 1</u> - Social-informational role-taking</p> <p>The child is aware that other has a social perspective based on other's own reasoning, which may or may not be similar to the child's. However, the child tends to focus on one perspective rather than coordinating viewpoints.</p>	<p><u>Stage 1</u> - Punishment and Obedience orientation</p> <p>The child focuses on one perspective, that of the authority or the powerful. However, the child understands that good actions are based on good intentions. Beginning sense of fairness as equality of acts.</p>

PARALLEL STRUCTURED RELATIONS BETWEEN COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND MORAL JUDGMENT STAGES (con't)

Cognitive Stage*	Role-taking Stage**	Moral Judgment Stage**
<p><u>Stage 2 - Concrete Operations--</u> <u>Reversible Thought</u></p> <p>In this stage reversibility is developed and thus logical thought begins to develop. The child is still limited in the number of variables he can consider. The ability to deal with composition, reversibility, associativity, identity, tautology and interaction have taken their place in the child's thought process.</p>	<p><u>Stage 2 - Self-reflective Role-taking</u></p> <p>The child is conscious that each individual is aware of the other's perspective and that this awareness influences self and other's view of each other. Putting self in another's place is a way of judging his intentions, purposes, and actions. The child can form a coordinated chain of perspectives, but cannot yet abstract from this process to the level of simultaneous mutuality.</p>	<p><u>Stage 2 - Instrumental Orientation</u></p> <p>Moral reciprocity is conceived as the equal exchange of the intent of two persons in relation to one another. If someone has a mean intention toward self, it is right for self to act in kind. Right is defined as what is valued by self.</p>
<p><u>Stage 3 - Formal Operations--</u> <u>Conservation and Groupings</u></p> <p>The child is no longer deterred by his perception, nor limited to the concrete situation, he can consider a number of variables in turn. The adolescent can now begin to use both inversion and the reciprocal as well as understand actions and reactions.</p>	<p><u>Stage 3 - Mutual Role-taking</u></p> <p>The child realizes that both self and other can view each other mutually and simultaneously as subjects. The child can step outside the two-person dyad and view the interaction from a third person perspective.</p>	<p><u>Stage 3 - Orientation to Maintaining Mutual Expectations</u></p> <p>Right is defined as the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. The child considers all points of view and reflects on each person's motives, in an effort to reach agreement among all participants.</p>

PARALLEL STRUCTURED RELATIONS BETWEEN COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND MORAL JUDGMENT STAGES (con't)

Cognitive Stage\*

Stage 4 - Formal Operations--  
Real Versus the Possible

The adolescent can think and reason inductively, being able to generalize from a number of instances. The adolescent has reached the structure of the final equilibrium to which concrete operations tend.

Role-Taking Stage\*\*

Stage 4 - Social and Conventional System Role-Taking

The person realizes that mutual perspective-taking does not always lead to complete understanding. Social conventions are seen as necessary because they are understood by all members of the group (generalized other) regardless of their position, role or experience.

Moral Judgment Stage\*\*

Stage 4 - Orientation to Society's Perspective

Right is defined in terms of the perspective of the generalized other or the majority. Person considers consequences of action for the group or society. Orientation to maintenance of social morality and social order.

Stage 5 - Orientation to Social Utility and Individual Rights \*\*\*

Right is defined as being aware of the fact that most values and rules are relative but some non-relative values like life and liberty must be upheld in any society.

\* Helmore (1969) pp. 8-12

\*\* Selman (Ed. Lickona, 1976) p. 309

\*\*\* Kohlberg (1976) pp. 19 & 20

Stage 6 - Orientation to the Universal Ethical Principle \*\*\*

Right is defined as universal principles used to generate decisions with such principles being justice, the equality of human rights, and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

has been more deeply investigated as well as the correlation between role-taking and moral development.

Conceptually, Selman sees role-taking as a form of social cognition intermediate between logical and moral thought with the individuals' reorganization to a conventional level of moral thought being due in part to their newly developed ability to deal with their own and other's perspective in a reciprocal fashion. Selman (1971) decided to research the relationship of role-taking skills to the development of moral judgment in children by administering Kohlberg's (1963) moral-judgment measure, two role-taking tasks, and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to sixty middle-class children ages eight, nine, and ten. Results indicated that at this age range, with intelligence controlled, the higher levels of moral judgment were related to the greater ability to take another's perspective.

A one-year follow up of the ten subjects whose role-taking and moral judgment levels were low compared to their intellectual development, supported the hypothesis that the development of the role-taking ability to understand the reciprocal nature of interpersonal relations is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of conventional moral thought. Selman hypothesized that if the subject's level of measured ability on one variable increased without a concomitant increase in level on the other variable, this would argue for the systematic primacy of development of the increasing variable. The ten subjects were retested with the same instruments and procedures. Half of the subjects scored higher on the role-taking scale while only two

of the subjects scored higher on the moral judgment scale (Selman, 1971).

Results of these two studies indicate that reciprocal role-taking is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of conventional moral thought.

In a related study, Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey (1974) showed the mediating role of cognitive development in moral judgment, concluded that the higher correlations and systematic relationships between the stages of cognitive development and moral development suggest that sophisticated cognitive operations are a prerequisite to advanced moral judgments and that if there is a lag, or decalage, in the acquisition of logical operations there will be a lag, or decalage, in their application to the area of morality. In this study the confounding influence of age was avoided by examining the relationship between cognitive and moral development within two specific age groups--12 and 19 year olds. The question of whether or not the two processes of moral and cognitive development were related was examined by correlating performance on three Piagetian measures of formal operations with moral reasoning given in response to six of Kohlberg's moral dilemmas. Substantial correlations were obtained for both groups, clearly indicating that a substantial relationship does exist between cognitive and moral development that is independent of age and its many correlates.

Kohlberg (1976) puts it more succinctly by stating that a person whose logical stage is only concrete operational is limited to the pre-conventional moral stages, one and two, while a person whose logical stage is low formal operational would be limited to stage three. Stages

four and five would require higher formal operations.

While cognitive development is necessary for moral development and sets limits to it, its presence is not sufficient in itself for equal levels of moral or role-taking functioning. The same relationship obtained between cognitive and moral development appears to be present between moral and role-taking. It would appear that most individuals function highest on the cognitive scales with their role-taking abilities being slightly less and their moral development being dependent on the cognitive and role-taking results.

#### Adolescent Thought

To understand the relationship among cognitive, role-taking and moral development of emotionally disturbed adolescents, one must first have some understanding of adolescent thought processes in general. Inhelder and Piaget (1958) demonstrated that the child developed concrete operations and carries them out on classes, relations, or numbers; their structure, however, never goes beyond the level of elementary logical "groupings," or additive and multiplicative numerical groups. In contrast, adolescents superimpose propositional logic on the logic of classes and relations; this integration allows them to bring inversion and reciprocity together into a single whole. An individual's social environment remains indispensable for the realization of these possibilities; consequently their realization can be accelerated or retarded as a

function of cultural and educational conditions. The growth of formal thinking, as well as the age at which adolescence itself occurs, remains dependent on social more than on neurological factors (p. 335).

On the naive global level the adolescent thinks beyond the present; he begins to commit himself to possibilities, is able to analyze his own thinking, can construct theories, and becomes motivated to take his place in the adult framework. Formal thinking involves both "thinking about thought" and reversal of the relationship between what is real and what is possible. The adolescent becomes capable of reflective thinking and this makes it possible for him to escape the concrete present toward the realm of the abstract and the possible (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958).

Formal operational thought not only enables the adolescent to conceptualize his own thoughts, but also permits him to conceptualize the thoughts of others. It is this capacity to take account of other people's thoughts that is the crux of adolescent egocentrism. This egocentrism emerges because the adolescent fails to differentiate between the objects of other's thoughts and those which are the focus of his own concern. One consequence of adolescent egocentrism is that, in actual impending social situations, the young person anticipates the reactions of other people to himself. These anticipations, however, are based on the premise that others are as admiring or as critical of him as he is of himself (Elkind, 1970).

#### Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents

This egocentrism becomes apparent in a study of institutionalized



emotionally disturbed children where Neal (1966) found them to have significantly lower perceptual role-taking abilities than a "normal" control group. Applying Piaget's concept of egocentrism, that children below age eleven are unable to communicate fully and see the views of other people, to emotionally disturbed children, Neal hypothesized that emotionally disturbed children would show greater egocentrism than a normal control group. Twenty subjects from an institution for emotionally disturbed children and twenty from a public school were tested with a Piagetian task consisting of a mountain scene and a series of views of this scene. Each subject was to identify views other than the one at which they were looking. It was found that the institutionalized subjects were significantly more egocentric, indicating a significantly lower perceptual role-taking ability for the emotionally disturbed sample.

According to Piaget, this social-cognitive immaturity of adolescence is a reflection of the more general inability of young children to decenter or depariticularize the focus of their conceptual concerns (Piaget and Inhelder, 1956).

This thought has been reinforced by other authors who felt that persons, who because of their immaturity have not yet acquired the ability to end their own highly personalized views, are presumed to lack the prerequisite skills necessary to negotiate a variety of otherwise commonplace social transactions and have been shown to perform poorly on tasks requiring communication and social role-taking (Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Wright, and Jarvis, 1968).

It would appear that this inability to decenter (egocentrism) may

break down the socialization process which would prove critical in the development of emotionally disturbed adolescents.

In a similar study of emotionally disturbed adolescents, Chandler, Greenspan, and Barenboim (1974) hypothesized that: 1) institutionalized emotionally disturbed children (ages 8 to 15), characterized by chronic social adjustment problems, would evidence marked developmental delays in the acquisition of role-taking and referential communication skills, 2) these developmental deficits could be partially remediated through programs of communication and role-taking training, and 3) such changes would be accompanied by measureable improvements in social competence. One hundred twenty-five institutionalized emotionally disturbed children were evaluated in terms of their role-taking and referential communication skills. On the basis of this evaluation, the forty-eight subjects who performed most poorly on these measures were randomly assigned to one of two experimental training programs intended to remediate deficits in either role-taking or referential communication skills. As a group these institutionalized subjects were found to be delayed significantly in the acquisition of both role-taking and referential communication skills when compared with samples of their normal age-mates. Pre- and post-intervention comparisons indicated that subjects of both experimental groups improved significantly in their role-taking ability. Subjects of the communication training program also demonstrated significant improvement in referential communication skills. A 12-month follow up showed a trend for improvements in both test measures to be associated with improvement in social adjustment as rated by institutional staff.

The results of this study tend to corroborate Chandler's earlier research (1971, 1972, 1973). Doctoral dissertations by Martin (1968), Thompson (1968), and Filer (1972) also indicate that in comparison to their better-adjusted peers, institutionalized emotionally disturbed children typically display marked developmental delays in the acquisition of role-taking and referential communication skills.

#### Summary

Although there is a paucity of research dealing with the specific aspects of cognition, role-taking, and moral development of emotionally disturbed adolescents, some general trends are suggested. There is an apparent positive relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment skills of any individual. It would also appear that there is a hierarchical dependency with the cognitive development providing the foundation for the role-taking and moral development. Role-taking abilities also seem to be necessary for the development of one's moral judgment skills.

Additionally, there is reason to suspect that emotionally disturbed adolescents will show significant delays in the areas of role-taking and moral development. There is also reason to suspect that a deficiency in role-taking skills may result in social maladjustment. It would appear, therefore, that the inclusion of role-taking skills in the treatment of emotionally disturbed adolescents may help to eliminate their deficiency in the role-taking area and hopefully improve their social and moral maturity; also emotionally disturbed adolescents trained to anticipate other's perceptions of their actions may be more able to guide their own behavior.

## Chapter Three

### METHODOLOGY

#### Population and Selection of the Sample

The two samples were drawn from two separate school systems within the Tidewater area of Virginia. The emotionally disturbed adolescent sample was drawn from the pupil population of a large suburban-urban school system. This sample consisted of nine students in a non-mainstreamed program for the emotionally disturbed.

The normal sample was drawn from the pupil population of a small county school system. The normal sample was matched to the emotionally disturbed sample for sex, race, age and IQ.

The emotionally disturbed adolescent sample was found by contacting various school divisions. The first school division had no identified emotionally disturbed population. The second division contacted had identified fifteen emotionally disturbed adolescents in a non-mainstreamed program. On the day of testing, thirteen of the students were present, ten had returned parental permission slips but only nine chose to participate.

Acceptable matches from the normal population were found by screening the local school system and checking the SRA results for an equivalent STEA score to match the IQ's of the emotionally disturbed sample. This resulted in a pool of approximately twenty-seven subjects, giving a match and two alternates for each emotionally disturbed subject. The nine comparison group subjects met with the examiner and the purpose of the research was explained. One of the students chose not to participate. Her alternate

was called and chose to participate.

### Procedures

To explore the relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment of the subjects, each subject was administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT, 1965). This determined near level of intellectual functioning and mental age.

Next, each subject was asked to respond to the Binet-Simon Test of Absurd Sentences (Piaget, 1968) in order to assess developmental level of cognitive functioning.

The third instrument, Flavell's Picture Story Role-taking Task (1975) was used to clarify the subject's developmental level of role-taking abilities.

Finally, each subject was interviewed using the Kohlberg Moral Judgment Interview Form A (1976) to determine the developmental level of moral judgment.

All tests were read to the subjects to eliminate all confounding factors such as inattention, forgetfulness, or any reading problem.

### Ethical Safeguards

To protect confidentiality and to insure free participation of each subject, written parental or guardian permission (Appendix A) was obtained as well as a signed personal consent form (Appendix B) for each subject before allowing his or her participation in this research.

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by both of the school systems involved as well as by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the School of Education, College of William and Mary.

### Instrumentation

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (1965) is an individually administered intelligence test utilizing a graduated series of 150 plates, each containing four pictures. To administer the scale, the examiner shows a plate and says the corresponding stimulus word. The subject indicates the picture which best illustrates the meaning of the stimulus word. Raw scores can be converted to three types of derived scores: mental age, intelligent quotients, and percentile ranks.

The alternate-form reliability coefficients calculated by age levels for the subjects on which the test was standardized ranged from a high of .84 at the 17- and 18-year levels to a low of .67 at the six-year level, with a median coefficient of .77 (Dunn, 1965).

In reporting the validity of the test, Dunn (1965) shows the median correlation of the PPVT with the Stanford-Binet to be .71; with the Wechsler Scale, it was .61.

Binet-Simon Test of Absurd Sentences. The five absurd sentences of the Binet-Simon (Appendix C) call for fairly subtle powers of reasoning. According to Piaget (1968) the order of difficulty of the phrases is as follows: the question of the "three brothers" and of "Friday" appear to be the most difficult, the question of the "railway accident" being the easiest.

The subjects' responses are assigned to one of three cognitive levels of functioning:

**Level One--Preoperational:** Those subjects not able to correctly answer any of the absurdities or only able to identify the "railway accident"

fell within this preoperational level because it appeals directly to the subjects' sense of reality without any presuppositions about the data.

Level Two--Concrete Operational: Those subjects able to identify the absurdities of the "railway accident," "young girl," and "poor cyclist," fell within this concrete operational level because their responses would not presuppose any preliminary change of point of view on the part of the subjects, but would simply call for a certain sense of reality and some supposition about the data.

Level Three--Formal Operational: Those subjects answering correctly all of the questions fell with the formal operational level because the "Friday" and "three brothers" call for the subjects to be able to place themselves at a point of view other than their own. This necessitates reasoning of a relative and formal kind (Piaget, 1968).

According to Piaget (1968) the reliability is that of the Binet-Simon Test which claims that the five absurd sentences are usually solved by age 12, and by 75 percent of the subjects at age 11. No formal validity studies have been undertaken and Piaget claims that the results tally with what has generally been found by writers who have verified the Binet-Simon tests.

Within this research the reliability coefficient based on two independent scorers was a perfect 1 with both scorers rating each subject identically.

Flavell's Picture Story Role-taking Task. The stimulus materials consisted of seven pasteboard cards with an average surface of nine square inches. On each card is drawn a scene in which a boy is the

central figure (Appendix D). It was intended that this sequence of seven pictures elicit stories that the dog frightened the boy who sought refuge in the tree. After the dog left, the boy enjoyed the apples on the tree.

The four-picture sequence is constructed by simply deleting the cards which depict the threatening dog. This set of pictures is designed to elicit a quite different story such as the boy sees an apple tree and climbs it to get an apple. The dog pictured is simply a part of the background and of no relevance to the story.

The subjects were first asked to tell the seven-picture story. They were then asked to pretend that their best friend just entered the room and their friend had not seen the seven-picture story. Their friend is to relate the storyline connected with the four-picture story. Two probing questions were asked: What reason would your friend give for the boy climbing the tree, and what reason would your friend give for the dog being there.

Each subject's response to this task is assigned to one of four categories.

Category One. The subjects give a more or less straightforward presentation of the seven-picture story rather than the four-picture one. The dog is clearly established as the motive for climbing the tree during the narration proper, prior to inquiry.

Category Two. Although the fear-of-dog motive is not explicitly mentioned during the narration, it is readily supplied during the inquiry.

Category Three. While some sort of fear is introduced, the subjects say something that indicates some recognition that they were



operating from the four-picture sequence, that is, something which suggests at least a modicum of sensitivity to the role-taking aspects of the task.

Category Four. The subjects give a rather straightforward presentation of the "correct" four-picture story, that is, that the boy climbed the tree to get an apple or some non-fear motive.

The reliability was assigned on the basis of an interjudge agreement. Flavell (1975) claimed that the responses were assigned to one of the four categories with 85 percent agreement. The validity was never formally addressed, but Flavell comments that the prediction was that the magnitude of the ratio of responses falling into the highest category should increase with age reflecting a developmental trend.

The reliability coefficient in this study was .98 with an interjudge agreement of 89 percent.

Moral Judgment Interview Form A (1976). Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A (Appendix E) consists of three social-moral dilemmas that subjects were asked to respond to by indicating what they thought a third person should do in each case. Approximately nine probing questions follow each dilemma. Form A covers six basic issues: life, law, punishment, conscience, affiliation, and contract. Through a procedure called "intuitive issue scoring," each stage of each issue for each dilemma is defined.

The reliability for the 1958 model indicated interjudge agreement between .85 and .92 while test-retest coefficients were .84. No reliability coefficients are given for the 1972 method (Kohlberg, 1976). The new manual hopes to provide a better representation of the moral judgment sub-stages and a system for substage scoring. In general, the experience is

that the stage definitions will change very little and that the score obtained with the final draft will not vary substantially from those obtained with the current manual. The interscoring reliability in this study was .83.

The new manual (Kohlberg, in press) also has revisions in the criterion judgment and scoring rules based on the application of the current system to a sample of longitudinal cases covering twenty years time span. These revisions are designed to maximize the measure's validity.

### Design

This present investigation incorporated an ex post facto analysis design (Campbell and Stanley, 1963), with the two samples matched for sex, age, race, and IQ, all subjects were administered the various assessments to determine the relationships among the variables under consideration. Generalizability will be limited. But the results of this study have a substantial body of theory and data by which to analyze them.

### Statistical Analysis

To analyze the results obtained by administering the various cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment assessments, the t-test was used for single mean comparisons for Hypothesis 1, in which the basic assumptions of the t-test were satisfied.

The Mann-Whitney U Test, a non-parametric statistic, was used to determine whether the two groups vary significantly when comparing the three variables of cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development. This statistic was used for testing Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4.

Finally, the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficient was

incorporated in order to determine the degree of relationship between the different variables as indicated in Hypothesis 5.

Specific Hypotheses (Null)

The review of the literature leads to the conclusion that one's cognitive functioning appears to underly several other types of developmental phenomena such as role-taking abilities and moral judgment development. There is evidence that the degree of development between emotionally disturbed adolescents and their normal peers would seem to favor the normal peers.

These basic trends lead us to present the following hypotheses. For the purpose of statistical hypothesis testing, these will be stated in null form.

Hypothesis 1

There is no difference in intellectual ability of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Hypothesis 2

There is no difference in cognitive functioning of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Hypothesis 3

There is no difference in role-taking abilities of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Hypothesis 4

There is no difference in moral judgment development of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

### Hypothesis 5

There is no relationship among the cognitive functioning, role-taking abilities, and moral judgment development of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

#### Summary

A sample of nine students and their matched pairs was drawn from the pupil population of two school systems in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Each subject was assessed on four measures: The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to obtain a near IQ; the Binet-Simon Absurd Sentences Test to obtain a cognitive level of functioning; Flavell's Picture Story Role-taking Task to determine each subject's level of role-taking abilities; and Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview to determine their level of moral development.

The  $t$ -test, Mann-Whitney U Test and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation were used to categorize and to compare for relationships concerning the five hypotheses.

## Chapter Four

### RESULTS

The report of the analyses of the data will follow in the order in which the hypotheses were stated.

#### Hypothesis 1

There is no difference in intellectual ability of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Table 2 shows that no statistical difference was obtained between these two groups concerning their intellectual abilities nor was there any indication of any difference between the two samples concerning their mental and chronological ages. IQ's ranged from 82 to 116 for the emotionally disturbed group with the median IQ being 99. For the normal group, IQ's ranged from 78 to 112 with the median IQ being 100. The chronological age range for the emotionally disturbed sample was 14-9 to 19-4 with the median chronological age being 17-6, while the normal sample's chronological age ranged from 14-9 to 18-7 with the median age being 17-5. Mental ages ranged from 11-0 to 18-0 for the emotionally disturbed group and from 10-4 to 18-0 for the normal group with the average mental age being 16-2 for the emotionally disturbed sample and 16-6 for the normal peers. It can be concluded that the groups are similar in intellectual development as well as having similarities in both mental and chronological ages.

#### Hypothesis 2

There is no difference in cognitive functioning of emotionally

Table 2

COMPARISON OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED (ED)  
AND NORMAL SUBJECTS ON MATCHED VARIABLES

		ED	Normal	t-test Value	Probability Level
CA	Mean	17.1	17.0	0.15	0.88
	SD	1.7	1.5		
IQ	Mean	99.7	100.6	0.20	0.84
	SD	9.6	9.5		
MA	Mean	16.2	16.6	0.35	0.72
	SD	2.1	2.5		

disturbed and normal adolescents.

While this hypothesis is not rejected because no statistical difference was found (Table 3), Figure 1 indicates the presence of a trend with the normal sample exhibiting a higher level of cognitive functioning than their emotionally disturbed counterparts. Six of the nine subjects in the normal sample scored within the upper limits of the cognitive range while only three of the emotionally disturbed adolescents exhibited an equal level of cognitive abilities.

#### Hypothesis 3

There is no difference in role-taking abilities of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Table 3 indicates a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between the two groups in role-taking abilities. Figure 2 shows that this divergence in skills favors normal adolescents with the normal sample exhibiting greater role-taking skills. Seven of the normal sample scored with the upper limits of the role-taking range while only three emotionally disturbed adolescents did as well.

On the role-taking task, the two emotionally disturbed adolescents who were unable to take a view different from their own appeared to exhibit more severe emotional symptoms than their school-mates.

#### Hypothesis 4

There is no difference in moral judgment development of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

Concerning this hypothesis, no significant difference was obtained between the two groups (Table 3), but the normal sample did score higher on

**Table 3**  
**MANN-WHITNEY U TEST OF DIFFERENCE IN COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING,**  
**AND MORAL JUDGMENT SKILLS BETWEEN EMOTIONALLY**  
**DISTURBED (ED) AND NORMAL ADOLESCENTS**

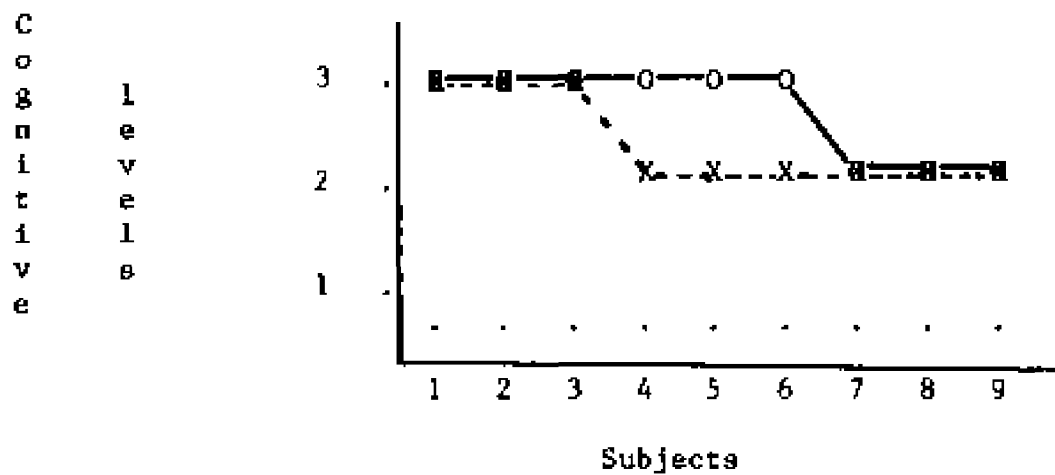
		ED	Normal	U Value	Proba- bility Level
Cognitive Functioning	Mean Rank	8	11	27.0	0.16
Role-Taking Abilities	Mean Rank	7.28	11.72	20.5	0.04
Moral Judgment Development	Mean Rank	7.67	11.33	24.0	0.14



Figure 1

COMPARISON OF COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING BETWEEN EMOTIONALLY  
DISTURBED (ED) AND NORMAL ADOLESCENTS

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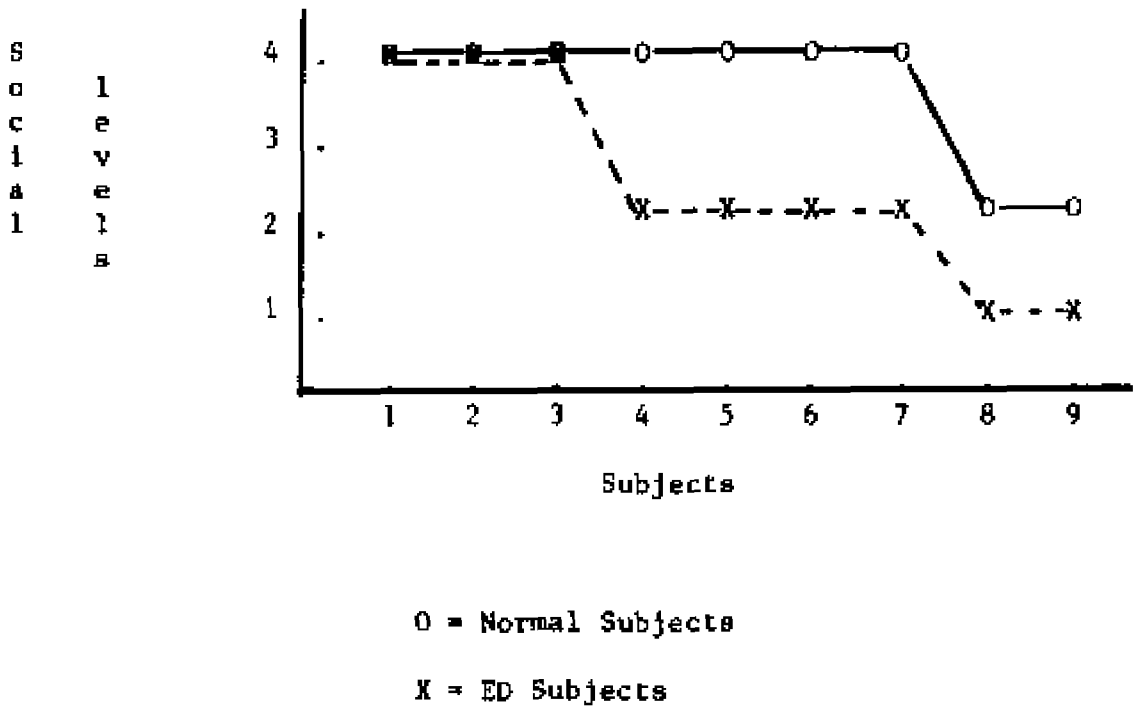


O = Normal Subjects

X = ED Subjects

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Figure 2  
COMPARISON OF ROLE-TAKING ABILITIES BETWEEN EMOTIONALLY  
DISTURBED (ED) AND NORMAL ADOLESCENTS



the moral judgment scale as can be seen in Figure 3. This hypothesis is, therefore, not rejected.

#### Hypothesis 5

There is no relationship among the cognitive functioning, role-taking abilities and moral judgment development of emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents.

This hypothesis is rejected at the .05 level of significance. Table 4 indicates the Spearman rank order coefficients are all significantly high, reflecting a high correlation between and among the variables, with the highest correlation being noted between the cognitive and moral judgment development for both the emotionally disturbed and normal adolescents. The correlation between the cognitive and role-taking, as well as the correlation between the role-taking and moral judgment skills, were equally as high but less than the correlation noted between the cognitive and moral judgment development for both groups.

The correlation (Table 4) was higher for the emotionally disturbed adolescents in each of the three categories. The emotionally disturbed sample scored lower in all of the categories tested, giving their profile a depressed but even reading. The normal sample scored high on the cognitive assessment and higher on the role-taking task while only doing average on the moral judgment dilemmas which resulted in greater statistical discrepancies in the resultant correlations.

Figure 3  
COMPARISON OF MORAL JUDGMENT DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN EMOTIONALLY  
DISTURBED (ED) AND NORMAL ADOLESCENTS

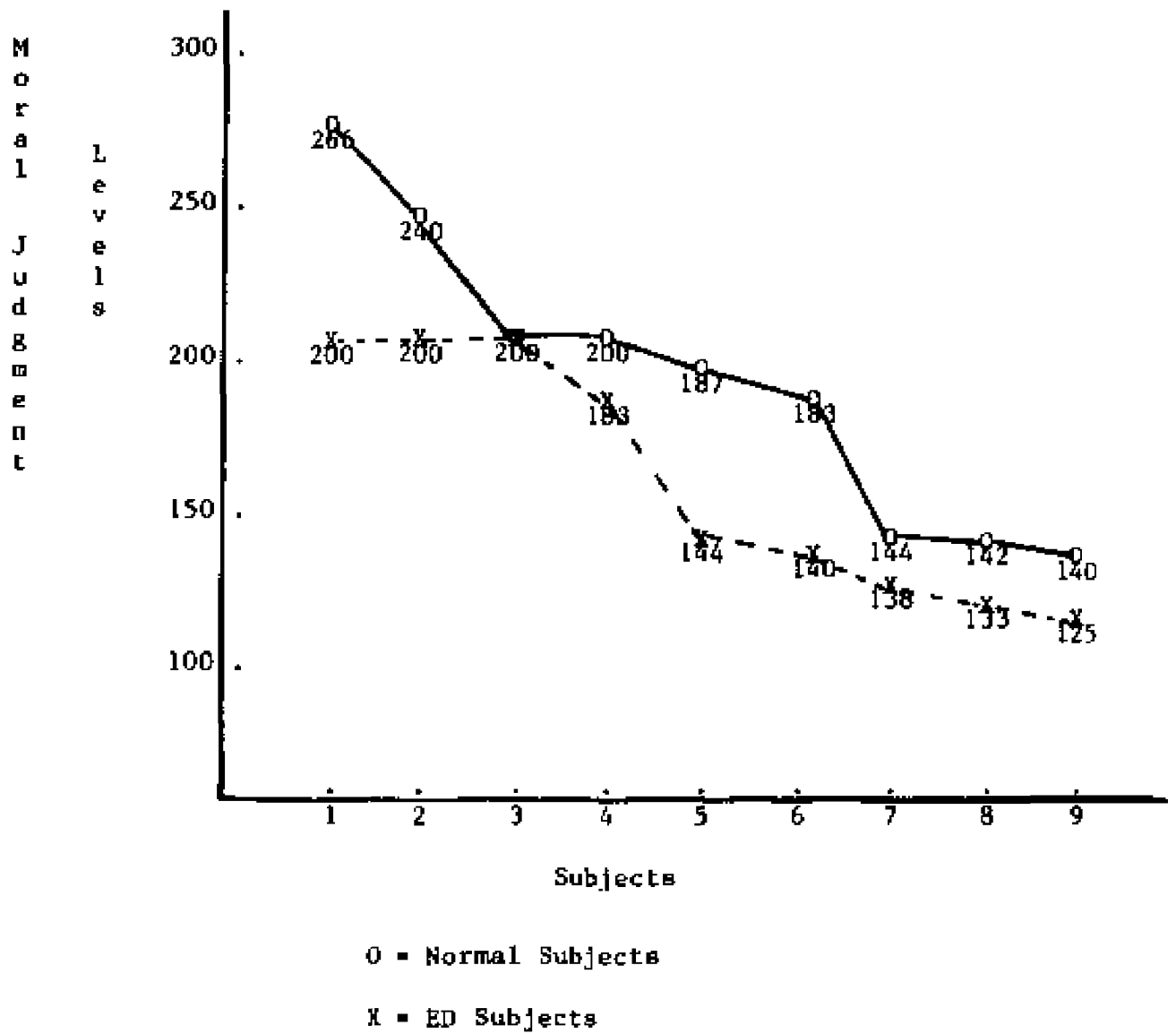


Table 4  
 SPEARMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR  
 COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING, ROLE-TAKING ABILITIES,  
 AND MORAL JUDGMENT DEVELOPMENT

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Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents		
	rho	significance
Cognitive Functioning	.90	p < .01
Role-taking Abilities		
Role-taking Abilities	.89	p < .01
Moral Judgment Development		
Cognitive Functioning	.94	p < .01
Moral Judgment Development		
Normal Adolescents		
Cognitive Functioning	.85	p < .01
Role-taking Abilities		
Role-taking Abilities	.72	p < .05
Moral Judgment Development		
Cognitive Functioning	.87	p < .01
Moral Judgment Development		

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## Chapter Five

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship among cognitive, role-taking, and moral judgment abilities of emotionally disturbed adolescents. While various studies have explored the dependency of moral development on cognitive functioning (Kohlberg, 1976; Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey, 1974), and the necessity of role-taking abilities for moral development (Selman, 1971; Selman and Damon, 1975), very little research has centered around the effects of emotional disturbance on the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development of adolescents.

The comprehensive survey of the literature, while yielding a limited number of relevant articles, nevertheless suggested that emotionally disturbed children manifest developmental delays in their role-taking abilities when compared to their normal peers (Chandler, 1973; Chandler et al., 1974; and Neal, 1966). The present study is consistent with previous research in finding a delay in the role-taking abilities of emotionally disturbed adolescents. Also, the study demonstrates the interrelatedness among the three variables: cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment.

It was originally hypothesized that there would be no difference between the cognitive level of functioning for the two groups of subjects. In as much as Piaget (1968) pointed out that the absurd sentences are usually solved by all subjects by age 12, and by 75 percent of the subjects by age 11, it was thought that all of the subjects would be

functioning within the higher cognitive level. While attaining similar scores on generalized measures of achievement (e.g., Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test), it is likely that substantial horizontal and vertical decalage exist in the cognitive structures of emotionally disturbed adolescents. Consequently, educators relying on standardized achievement measures and chronological age of emotionally disturbed adolescents as indicators of the youngsters' cognitive abilities may overestimate their cognitive development. Furthermore, since cognitive functioning is the foundation of role-taking and moral judgment, these erroneous expectations may be further compounded, and even more unreasonable expectations held for disturbed youngsters in the areas of role-taking and moral judgment.

This study is consistent with previous research and strongly suggests that when there is a lag or decalage in the acquisition of logical operations, which appears to be present in the emotionally disturbed sample, the lag or decalage will appear in the areas of role-taking and moral judgment. This would seem to reinforce the hypothesis that cognitive skills are the basis of the role-taking abilities and suggests a need for educational intervention focused on cognitive skills such as problem solving, logical operations, etc.

Despite the discrepancy between the cognitive levels of functioning for both samples, the IQ's for both groups were virtually the same. This is not a new phenomenon. Emotionally disturbed adolescents often appear to have adequate intellectual abilities but seem to exhibit some cognitive deficiencies. Curley and Fabie (1978), in their study of 240 normal and

emotionally disturbed children ages six to twelve, found that not only were the emotionally disturbed children deficient in the measured cognitive skills, but even the rate of development of these skills was inferior to that of the normal population. Whether the discrepancy between cognitive and intellectual abilities is caused by the emotional problem or whether this discrepancy results in the emotional problem is not addressed by this research. However, a strong relationship exists between emotional maladjustment and deficits in cognitive abilities.

As far as role-taking deficits are concerned, Chandler et al (1974) and Neal (1966) found that institutionalized emotionally disturbed children had significantly lower perceptual role-taking abilities than a "normal" control group. This research found significant differences between the role-taking abilities of normal and emotionally disturbed adolescents (Table 3). While three of the emotionally disturbed sample scored within the fourth level of role-taking abilities, seven of the normal peers did as well.

When comparing the number of subjects who were able to function on the highest cognitive level with the number of subjects who were able to function on the highest level of role-taking development, little difference was found between the two variables. Three of the emotionally disturbed subjects did just as well on the role-taking tasks as they did with the cognitive measure. Seven of the normal sample scored within the upper limits of the role-taking development as compared with six doing as well on the cognitive level.

Deficiency in the role-taking area when coupled with limited



cognitive abilities may be the cause of some of the emotionally disturbed adolescents' disruptive behavior. If one cannot see another's perspective, it becomes difficult to adjust to new social situations. One must be able to take the viewpoint of others before being able to interact cooperatively.

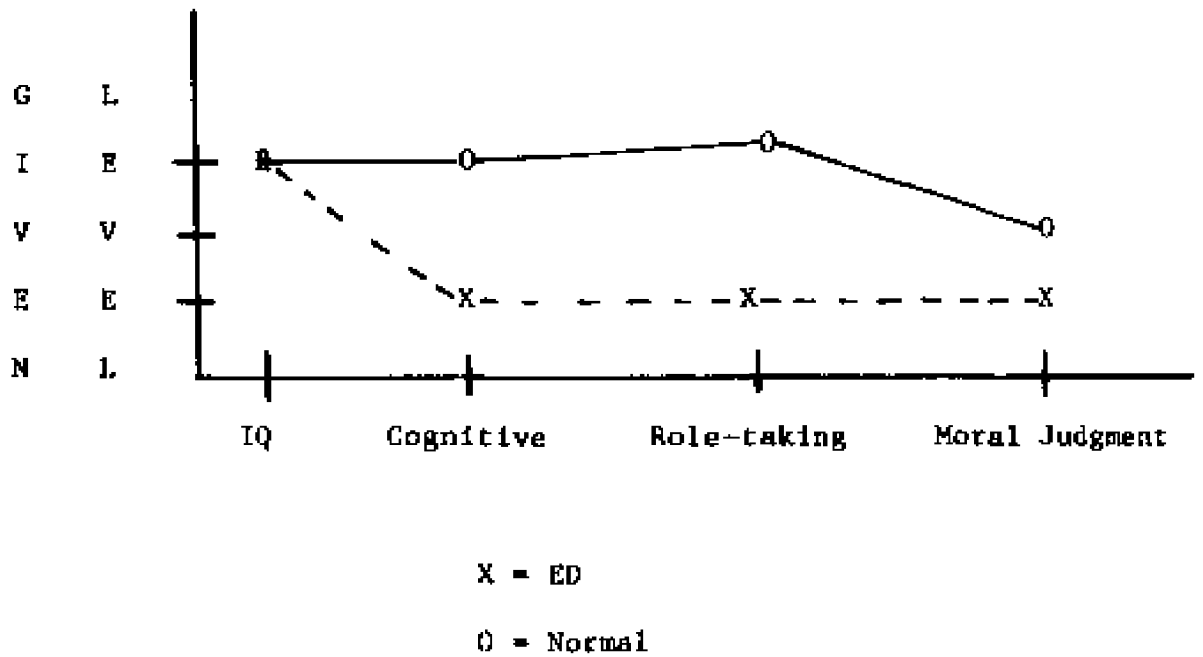
Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey (1974) in their investigation of the mediating role of cognitive development in moral judgment, concluded that the higher correlations and systematic relationships between the stages of cognitive operations are a prerequisite for advanced moral judgments. Table 4 indicates this high correlation between the stages of cognitive functioning and moral development as found in this study.

In this investigation, none of the subjects scored higher on the moral judgment scale than expected when comparing their moral judgment results with their cognitive and role-taking abilities. This would seem to support the view held by Selman and Damon (1975), that appropriate cognitive and role-taking development are necessary but not sufficient causes of moral judgment development. The data also support Kohlberg's (1976) statement that "since moral reasoning is clearly reasoning, advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning (p. 5)."

From the literature, extant data, and preceding discussion, it appears that there is a positive relationship among the three variables: cognitive functioning, role-taking abilities, and moral judgment development. Table 4 points out the interrelatedness of these variables. The profiles for the two groups of subjects differ considerably. Given a specific level of intellectual ability (Figure 4), the emotionally disturbed

Figure 4

COMPARISON OF THE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED (ED) AND NORMAL GROUPS' PROFILE  
FOR IQ, COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING AND MORAL JUDGMENT SKILLS



students scored lower on the Binet-Simon Absurdities than their normal peers, and this depression of cognitive functioning reflected itself in both lower role-taking and lower moral judgment scores.

#### Limitations

A major limitation in this study was the small number of subjects involved. Finding a subject pool of identified emotionally disturbed adolescents presented a major problem. The first school system contacted had no identified emotionally disturbed adolescent population. The second system had identified fifteen students and on the day of testing, thirteen of the students were present, ten had returned parental permission slips but only nine chose to participate.

A second concern was the volunteer nature of the normal subject pool. It was felt that this might limit or bias the sample. The normal sample was chosen by matching the emotionally disturbed sample on the basis of age, sex, race, and IQ. The results (Table 2) indicated a suitable match for the group as a whole and a rather high correlation for the subjects individually.

The unavailability of trained personnel to score the moral judgment interviews presented a third limitation. The individuals trained to score the interviews had to depend upon the directions as presented in the manual. Kohlberg suggested that it would take two years to learn and to become proficient in the scoring process. The individuals, however, did score all protocols as equally and as fairly as their limited training would allow, and the interrater reliability coefficient was .83.

The involvement of the author in the data gathering and scoring may

be considered a limitation. Necessity dictated a more active role than originally envisioned. The date set for the evaluation of the subjects fell within the College exam week, wherein the graduate students were not able to participate as planned. The author, with the assistance of two teachers, administered the various tasks. Two graduate students scored the various protocols as did the author in order to get an inter-judge reliability coefficient. This was done in an attempt to conserve time and because of the unavailability of trained personnel to do the scoring.

A final limitation was that this study is an ex post facto descriptive study and, as such, suffers the difficulties of that genre of educational research. The external validity of such a study is usually weak and therefore disallows any sweeping generalizations.

#### Further Study

While this study supports the reported relationship of role-taking and moral judgment skills with one's level of cognitive development, it also points out that given a certain degree of intellectual ability, cognitive skills of emotionally disturbed adolescents are somewhat depressed when compared with their normal peers. This discrepancy becomes statistically significant when comparing the emotionally disturbed students with their normal age-mates for role-taking skills. Therefore, replication of this study with a larger sample is needed before the cognitive and role-taking discrepancies can be adequately demonstrated.

Secondly, a study is needed to determine whether there is a relationship between the mental operations assessed by standard IQ tests and the

mental operations underlying Piaget's stages of cognitive development. This investigation indicated no significant relationship.

Thirdly, a further study to determine the relationship between cognitive functioning and role-taking abilities would be beneficial. Possibly the role-taking task involved in this study was too heavily cognitive in nature, dealing with other's perceptions and thoughts, rather than dealing with other's affections and emotions. If this is true, it may account for the necessity of cognitive development to precede role-taking and moral judgment development.

Finally, a study using an intervening strategy for cognitive and role-taking development may be beneficial. Blatt and Kohlberg (1975) found that over a period of three months, in eighteen 45-minute discussion sessions, young adolescents increased in their level of moral thinking. Chandler (1973) also noted significant improvement in role-taking abilities of delinquent subjects in an experimental intervention group.

An intervention strategy may help the students learn to express themselves clearly. It may be necessary to restate what a student says, to help the student hear better what he is saying, as well as help his peers understand him more easily. It would be necessary to point out to students that differing points of view exist. To show growth, one must be exposed to those points of view which may present a conflict, if one is to be motivated to think more deeply. Adolescents must be encouraged to defend their own perspectives and they must learn to criticize the points of view of others. This may lead the adolescent to become aware of the

fact that not everyone sees things as he does.

Possibly such an intervention strategy would enhance the educational and treatment programs for emotionally disturbed adolescents and result in their having better control over their own behavior as they begin to perceive and understand the perspective of others.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to show the relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development of emotionally disturbed adolescents.

The results of this study support the contention that when given an equal level of intellectual ability (IQ), emotionally disturbed adolescents have a depressed level of cognitive functioning, as well as depressed role-taking and moral judgment development as compared to normal peers.

While consistent with the results reported in previous research, this investigation has broadened the theoretical base to cover the interrelationship of all three variables: cognitive, role-taking, and moral judgment.

There appears to be a set hierarchy present with cognitive functioning forming the foundation and basis for the development of role-taking abilities and moral judgment skills. Role-taking development is also necessary for the development of moral judgment.

In pointing out the strong relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment skills of adolescents in general and emotionally disturbed adolescents in particular, this study supports the need for

education and treatment programs for emotionally disturbed adolescents to provide some intervention strategy that would include training in the cognitive and role-taking areas.

## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix A

February 1, 1980

Dear Parent:

Mr. James F. Kenney, school psychologist and doctoral candidate from the College of William and Mary, has received permission from the County School system to gather data concerning the social reasoning skills of adolescents, and your child's participation in this research would be greatly appreciated.

Your child will be asked to: respond to five absurd phrases by pointing out the absurdity of the phrases; comment on three social-moral problems; tell a story from seven pictures; and to respond to various stimulus words by pointing to a picture that best represents the stimulus word.

The total time of your child's involvement in this research will not exceed one hour. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do not wish your child to participate, it will not affect his educational program or status in any way.

We anticipate your favorable consideration and we hope that you would encourage your child to participate. It is intended that the data will be gathered during the week of February 4th, and I would appreciate your response on or before the 4th of February. Please complete the appropriate response and return to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ the receptionist for \_\_\_\_\_ School. If you have any questions concerning this research, feel free to call Mr. Kenney at home after 5:00 p.m., or at work during the day.

Sincerely yours,

Associate Principal

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this research project if she/he wishes to do so. I understand that complete confidentiality will be maintained and the results of the research will be shared with the \_\_\_\_\_ County School system. I understand that results of the study will be available to me if I so request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

I do not give my permission for my child to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

NOTE: Sign here only if you do not give permission.

Appendix B  
STUDENT AGREEMENT FORM

I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I do not want to participate that such a decision will not affect my educational program in any way.

I do freely consent to participate in this doctoral research for Mr. Kenney.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix C

The Binet-Simon Absurd Sentences Test

What is foolish about the following sentences:

1. A poor cyclist had his head smashed and died on the spot; he was taken to the hospital and it is feared that he will not recover.
2. I have three brothers: Paul, Ernest, and myself.
3. The body of a poor young girl was found yesterday, cut into 18 pieces. It is thought that she must have killed herself.
4. There was a railway accident yesterday, but it was not very serious. The number of deaths was only 48.
5. Someone said: If ever I kill myself from despair I won't choose a Friday, because Friday is a bad day and would bring me ill luck.

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Appendix F

RAW DATA RECEIVED FROM THE PROTOCOLS

E.D. Sample						Normal Sample							
	CA	IQ	MA	C	R	MJI		CA	IQ	MA	C	R	MJI
W F	14-9	82	11-0	2	2	144	W F	14-9	78	10-4	2	4	266
W M	15-3	109	17-1	2	1	125	W M	15-5	105	16-5	2	4	140
W F	15-9	97	15-3	2	2	200	W F	15-9	112	18-0+	3	2	200
B M	16-0	103	16-1	2	2	200	B M	16-2	99	15-9	3	4	142
W F	17-6	99	16-10	2	1	133	W F	17-5	100	17-1	3	4	200
B M	17-11	102	18-0+	3	4	140	B M	18-1	100	18-0	2	2	144
W M	18-10	98+	17-7	3	4	138	W M	18-8	99+	17-10	3	4	187
W M	18-10	92+	16-1	3	4	200	W M	18-4	107	18-0+	3	4	183
W M	19-4	116+	18-0+	2	2	180	W M	18-7	106+	18-0+	3	4	240

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## VITA

James Francis Kenney

Personal Data

Birth Date: April, 1938  
 Place of Birth: Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Education

1956-1958	St. Lawrence College, Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin <u>Degree:</u> A. A. Concentration in Liberal Arts
1958-1960	St. Francis de Sales College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin <u>Degree:</u> B. A. concentration in Philosophy
1968-1970	Fordham University, Bronx, New York <u>Degree:</u> M. S. concentration in Education Division V
1971-1972	Radford University, Radford, Virginia <u>Degree:</u> M. A. concentration in Psychology
1974	James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia <u>Degree:</u> M. S. ED. concentration in School Psychology
1976-1978	College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia <u>Degree:</u> Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies concentration in Education-Administration
1978-1980	College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia <u>Degree:</u> Ed. D. concentration in Administration-Special Education

Additional Studies

1971	Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1971	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1974	University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Academic Honors

1974	Radford University: Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
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Professional Organizations

1974	Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society
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1974	Virginia Association of School Psychologists
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Experiences

1976-present Williamsburg-James City County Schools  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185  
Job Title: Psychologist

1975 Averette College  
Danville, Virginia  
Job Title: Adjunct Professor--Psychology

1974-1976 Pittsylvania County Public Schools  
Chatham, Virginia  
Job Title: Psychologist

1970-1973 St. Francis de Sales College  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Job Titles: Member of the Board of Admissions  
Member of the Board of Review  
Chairperson, Department of Education  
Professor of Education  
Associate Director of Student Activities  
Director of Student Activities  
Chairperson, Division of Social Studies  
Chairperson, Department of Psychology  
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1967-1970 Religious Education Office, Archdiocese of Milwaukee  
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## Abstract

# THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE COGNITIVE, ROLE-TAKING, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT ABILITIES OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED ADOLESCENTS

James Francis Kenney

May, 1980

The purpose of this study was to examine the interrelatedness of cognitive, role-taking, and moral judgment abilities. The problem of this study was to determine whether there was a significant difference between the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment skills of emotionally disturbed adolescents when compared with their normal peers.

While studies investigating this relationship have been few in number, there is an apparent positive relationship among the three variables with cognitive development providing the foundation for the role-taking and moral judgment development. Role-taking abilities also seem to be necessary for the development of one's moral judgment skills.

A sample of nine emotionally disturbed adolescents and their matched normal peers were drawn from the pupil population of two school systems in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Each subject was assessed on four measures: The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to obtain a near IQ; the Binet-Simon Absurd Sentences Test to obtain a cognitive level of functioning; Flavell's Picture Story Role-taking Task to determine each subject's level of role-taking abilities; and Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A to assess the level of moral judgment development.

The general hypothesis is emotionally disturbed adolescents, when matched to normal adolescents for age, sex, race and intelligence, will score significantly lower on tests of cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment development.

Results of this study indicated no difference between the two samples for mental and chronological ages or for intellectual abilities. A notable difference was present between the groups for level of cognitive functioning. A significant difference was found between the role-taking abilities of each sample and only a slight difference noted between the moral judgment skills of both groups with the emotionally disturbed adolescents being the weaker in each category.

In pointing out the strong relationship among the cognitive, role-taking and moral judgment skills of adolescents in general and of emotionally disturbed adolescents in particular, this study points out the need for education and treatment programs for emotionally disturbed adolescents to provide some intervention strategy that would include training in the cognitive and role-taking areas.